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SUBJECT: OSCE ZAGREB PLANS CLOSURE BY END OF 2007

(U) Sensitive but Unclassified; please handle accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary and comment: OSCE Zagreb Deputy Head of Mission (and retired FSO) Todd Becker briefed DCM January 22 on plans to bring the substantive work of the Mission to a close by December 31, [1](#)2007. HOM Jorge Fuentes was convinced that with a concerted push by both the OSCE and the Croatian government, the OSCE Mission could achieve its most important objectives in the country and leave on a high note at the end of the year, Becker said. In an interview published January 27, Fuentes told the Croatian press that work on four of the Mission's six mandates was complete, and noted that with continued efforts by both Mission and the GOC, closure could come at the end of 2007.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Embassy Zagreb concurs with HOM Fuentes' assessment and fully supports his plans to close the Croatia OSCE Mission by the end of this year. Croatia is firmly on the path towards membership in the EU and NATO, is fully compliant with the requirements of the ICTY, and continues to make good progress on the OSCE's key outstanding issues such as regional reconciliation, refugee return, and rule of law. The situation will not be perfect by the end of the year, but the growing NGO community, Embassy Zagreb, and the rest of the international community should be able to provide sufficient monitoring to call the GOC to account when it strays. This will allow the OSCE to redeploy its resources to other member countries where the needs are much greater. End Summary and comment.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Becker said the new OSCE CiO, Spanish FM Moratinos - an old friend of HOM Fuentes - was convinced the time had come to close the Croatia Mission. Informal soundings of Croatia's immediate EU neighbors indicate agreement with this plan, he said; Russia also favors it. However, there is a division in the EU on the issue, with Belgium, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries arguing that Croatia will continue to need an OSCE presence for a while longer.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Fuentes expects to make good progress in the next year on the two remaining significant OSCE programs continuing in Croatia, Rule of Law and Return and Integration, Becker said. While there may be a few desirable issues that will not be satisfactorily completed in this time, there should be an agreed-upon path towards their resolution.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Regarding Rule of Law, trial monitoring is the most significant area of concern. While the Ademi-Norac war crimes trial should be complete by year's end, less noteworthy but nevertheless important war crimes trials will continue for several years; the OSCE has been monitoring about 20 war crimes cases annually for the last few years. While there are many Croatians with the skills necessary to monitor such trials, the NGO sector is not yet sufficiently robust or well funded to employ them in this work, Becker said. Therefore, for the rest of the year the Mission will

work with the NGO community to strengthen it, and seek a funding mechanism to continue the activity, perhaps with support from foundations or the OSCE.

16. (SBU) Regarding Return and Integration of Croatian Serbs, Becker said that the key outstanding issues were faster progress on occupancy-tenancy rights (OTR, see 2006 Zagreb 1513) and "convalidation" (recognition by the GOC of working years in the Serb-held areas of Croatia from 1991 to 1995). While the OSCE recognizes the administrative and financial burden of constructing residences for the thousands of potential returnees who had occupancy-tenancy rights prior to the war, the GOC has the wherewithal to move faster on the issue and needs to do so. Fuentes will soon see PM Sanader to emphasize the importance of dealing with these issues quickly in the Mission's remaining months. (Note: The OSCE, EU, and UNHCR, along with the four countries in the region, plan to complete the Sarajevo declaration process on refugee returns this spring. While the GOC still needs to implement several programs, it appears to be on track.)

17. (SBU) Fuentes will report to the OSCE PC in June, at which point he should be able to recommend that the Mission be closed by the end of the year. If OSCE members cannot achieve consensus on the closure, Becker anticipates that the OSCE Secretariat would simply not propose to extend the Croatia Mission when it proposes the continuation of other OSCE Missions over the summer.

18. (U) Field offices: OSCE Zagreb plans a gradual and orderly closing of its Croatia field offices, Becker said. Karlovac would close in March; Split in June; Pakrac and Gospic in the fall; finally, Vukovar, Sisak, and Zadar would close with the Zagreb office in December.

19. (U) An administrative wrap-up of the Mission would require three to six additional months by a small group in 2008, Becker noted.

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This group would dispose of OSCE assets, which would require some negotiating with GOC customs officials on disposition of thousands of articles imported duty-free since the Mission began. It would not require senior-level leadership and might even be accomplished entirely by a few remaining local staff with supervision from OSCE Vienna, he said. This phase-out period is consistent with the time it took to close the OSCE Missions in the Baltics.

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